

IRON SOLDIER

Man on the street



Spc. Marcus A. Gibson
Clerk
Headquarters and Headquarters
Company
2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment

"My new year's resolutions are to make this year be the best that I can and to learn something new every day."



Spc. Anthony J. Bivens
Clerk
Headquarters and Headquarters
Company
2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment

"My new year's resolution is to be there for my wife and kids."

What is
your
resolution
for
2002

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Pvt. Jessica Hall
Medic
Company C, 501st Forward Support
Battalion

"My new year's resolution is to start school and not stop until I go all the way through and get a doctorate."



Pfc. Ronald R. Johnson
Turret technician
Company B, 501st Forward Support
Battalion

"My new year's resolution is to have a more caring heart."

Iron Veteran tells his story

Story by
Sgt. Gregory F. Withrow
1st Armored Division PAO

DENVER, Colorado - John P. Souther is an Iron Soldier, but one will not find his name in the active-duty roles. He is not stationed with 1st Armored Division in Germany or Fort Riley, Kansas, but he can be found in Gainesville, Ga. He is a long way from an Army post, but any curiosity about an Iron Soldier who is in his 80s can be satisfied by a trip to the 1st Armored Division Museum in Baumholder, Germany.

In "War Not Forgotten, A Front-line Officer's Eyewitness Account of World War II," Souther, a retired Army colonel, tells his story and the story of 1st Armored Division's 81st Reconnaissance Squadron during World War II.

In this revealing autobiography, Souther details Army life in the 1st Armored Division in the early days. He describes things the way they really were without glossing over the rough-and-tumble life of a soldier or the mumbo jumbo of politically correct viewpoints. He simply states things the way he saw them.

Souther talks about everything from soldiers' black eyes and bruises during Monday morning formations to the beating 1st Armored Division took in North Africa during Operation Torch. He describes how the fires of war tempered the mettle of men and machine, seeing the newly blooded division earn the respect of the battle-



John P. Souther

hardened Germans on the battlefield and how lessons learned and the perseverance of Iron Soldiers led to the liberation of Italy.

The respect Souther has for the division, its soldiers and its history is something he wishes to impart to today's Iron Soldiers. He recently donated a copy of his book to the 1st Armored Division Museum.

"I want the soldiers of 1st Armored Division to have my book. I hope they will read it and learn about what we went through," explained Souther at the 1st Armored Division Association Annual Reunion, August 2001. "I hope my book will be helpful to the division and its soldiers."

Souther, born while World War I was beginning to rage across Europe and raised in Blairsville in the Appalachian foothills of north Georgia, worked his way through college. He received a B.S. in forestry from the University of Georgia along with a commission in the United States Army just prior to World War II.

His experiences with 1st Armored Division would take him from the sleepy farming community of his youth to the ancient battlefields of North Africa and Italy – battlefields some, like Gen. George S. Patton Jr., had claimed to have visited in lives past. Souther doesn't claim to have been there before, but like many veterans of such terrible conflicts, he recounts visiting those sites in very vivid dreams.

"I still have dreams that I am actually in combat, and they seem so real, it is frightening," Souther writes in his book. "I can still visualize many of the soldiers and officers who lost their lives, as well as the fortunate ones who came back alive."

While the 81st Recon is no longer an active unit, Souther is still going strong.

He has attended more than 20 of the 1st Armored Division Association's meetings over the past 53 years and is still as sharp as ever. He will look you straight in the eye as he recalls the tremendous events in which he aided the 81st Recon and 1st Armored Division in shaping the outcome of World War II in North Africa and Italy.

"I can tell you many stories, but it's all right there in my book," said Souther.

For more information on Souther's book, the 1st Armored Division Association or any history pertaining to the division, contact the 1st Armored Division Museum at 0678-366-6349.

Souther can also be contacted at 730 Hillside Dr. NW, Gainesville, Ga., 30501.